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The Pyramid of the Sun  
**The Great Parable Series**

**HOUSES AND STORMS**

PARABLES

SECURE FOUNDATIONS

A PARABLE OF FOUNDATIONS      THE TEST OF HISTORY

FALSE FOUNDATIONS

IF WE COULD TRY AGAIN

SEE THE PATTERN WHOLE



**P**ELoved CENTURION:

There is always excitement at Mayan Headquarters when a new series of lessons is being prepared for you, and when it is ready, having been printed, put into the envelope and started on its way to you, it is with a fervent prayer and hope that it will accomplish for you all that your teachers hope that it may do. Everyone who has a part in it puts his or her heart and soul into the preparation and production, with the one thought uppermost in mind - that the contents of the lessons will be blessed and inspired to help you create a fuller life and give you a better understanding of how life was meant to be lived, for the greater our understanding, the more we will reap from that which God has given us.

And so it is with the utmost pleasure that we present for the enrichment of your life the new series which is entitled THE GREAT PARABLE SERIES. The first, which is in your hands now, is entitled HOUSES AND STORMS.

I would like to say here in passing that the lessons for you are prepared with the thought of your needs as the governing factor. The many letters which are received from our members every day, many of which are put in the chapel for prayer, are our guide to your needs in shaping your life, and in helping you overcome the storms which you encounter along life's highway.

This first lesson is stated quite simply, but as you go along in the lessons to come, in this series, you will find that they become deeper in their meaning, and for some a little more difficult to understand; but you, as a Companion in the advanced classes, will grasp the significance of the hidden meanings and your life will be better through having permitted these truths to enter your being.

As your instructor, I would like to suggest that you look upon this new series as a turning-point in your life. If there is something in your life which you would like to overcome, but which you are finding difficult, I sincerely feel that you can find the key to the solution in THE GREAT PARABLE SERIES. So let us proceed with this positive thought, and prayerfully, not only for ourselves, but for all our Companions on the path.

HOUSES AND STORMS. Matthew 7:24-27.

PARABLES

**T**HERE were many sides to the ministry of Jesus Christ, and they all helped, in one way or another, to make him a perfect revelation of the Divine. One of them was his work as a teacher, a teacher so effective that among many teachers the world has remembered he is known pre-eminently as the great teacher. His work is permanent. Emotions come and go, but understanding abides.

The kingdom of heaven has an instructional side, and it is very closely

related to the redemptive one. Mostly people do wrong not because they want to perpetrate evil, but because they know not what they do. When they learn better they do better. That is one of the chief redemptive processes. Learn the truth, for the truth will make you free. That was the line along which Jesus worked, and the one along which we are trying to work in these lessons.

What made Jesus the great teacher of the ages? First, the fact that he had the greatest and most important subject to teach - complete, inspired, redeemed living by means of which to build a new world order. Second, because he chose the best and soundest of teaching principles. It was a threefold one.

Second, he asked questions. A well-directed question is better than a statement because it stimulates the mind of the learner to find the answer for himself, after which it remains with him. Socrates had used this method effectively in Athens four hundred years earlier. The well-directed question promotes mental growth. It does for the mind what motion does for a cold motor. This is important for you to remember - if there is something you do not understand, do not be too timid to ask.

Third, he said just enough to set the sense of wonder going. The best teacher does not merely inform. He does not state the whole truth. He gives just enough of it to lure the student to work out the rest. Thus, the mind is stimulated and made eager for more and deeper understanding.

Fourth, he used parables. A parable is a story with a purpose. It is a narrative of something that need not necessarily have happened but that might happen, and which illustrates a truth in such a way that the learner can visualize it and see its reality for him. The mind forgets a lecture, but it does not forget a story. What is told in pictures lasts long after what is told in words is lost. The parables of Jesus would be the last part of his teachings ever to be forgotten.

This lesson series is to deal with some of the parables. They cannot all be considered, and those that are taken up cannot be dealt with exhaustively. Though our study must necessarily be brief, it will touch most of the high spots and set forth the cardinal principles these parables seem meant to suggest. Thus, at least some of the seed he sought to plant can be cultivated and, we hope, bring forth a kingdom harvest.

Please reread each parable at the beginning of the lesson dealing with it. Let its form of words fix itself in your mind, which is like covering well the seed you plant so its growth may be firm and sure. Please read each parable again at the close of the lesson about it, to see if any new light has been shed on it for you.

#### A PARABLE OF FOUNDATIONS

**T**HE scene is vivid and full of meaning. Jesus has been set apart and tested for the beginning of his public work. He has addressed a throng on a historic hillside, stating the cardinal principles of that good and blessed way of life that would transform the world. Having spoken his message, and being an expert speaker, he knows that he must impress it in

the minds of his hearers.

He wishes to conclude by saying that the structure of this good life he has outlined must rest on a solid foundation or it will fall. In this case the necessary foundation is the application of the truth of his teachings in action. This alone makes truth worth learning. To learn the truth and not do it is like planting a seed on a sun-scorched stone. Nothing can come of it.

To drive this truth home, he uses a parable, the first so far as we know, of all the considerable number he uttered during his ministry. It is the plain and simple story of two men who built houses. One built on a foundation of sand, and the wind and tide came, as they will, and swept it down. The other built his house on a rock, and the tempests and waves were powerless against it. The first man was like one who hears the truth and does nothing about it. The second typified one who hears the truth and carries it into action.

After the sermon on the mount was over, it was found that the quibblers and hair-splitters had not thought much of it, but the simple people who honestly wanted to improve their lives heard it gladly because they caught the note of authority in the words and in the voice and manner with which they were spoken. The parable had taken root, and it has been a strong support to hold the SERMON ON THE MOUNT, THAT CUTLINE OF KINGDOM LIVING, up to public attention these two thousand years.

The general message of this parable flings out its challenge to all who wish to think and live the truth. That message is, be careful of your foundations. It is not the richness of the superstructure of anything that makes it enduring. It is the sureness of its foundation. In all your attempts at living adequately, consider carefully the basis on which it rests. Unless that is sure, or made so, nothing else will matter much.

In planning and building your thought life and then developing it into action, be careful of your FOUNDATIONS. Do not build on specious fancy or the impulse to follow the crowd. Seek the bedrock of truth and build from there, and so far as living is concerned, JESUS REVEALED THAT BEDROCK in the sermon on the mount.

In planning what the ages will remember as your earthly life, the structure you will offer at the judgment throne, as your justification for having lived in the world, be careful of your foundations. Build only on what is sure, on the solid principles of justice, right, and wholeness, as indicated in the telling words of which the parable of the two foundations is the powerful conclusion. This is the beginning of the builder's skill.

The architecture, the beauty, and the utility of any structure will alike go down in ruins if they do not stand on solid foundations. No matter how fine they are, shifting sand will not support them.



FALSE FOUNDATIONS

**U**HERE are many ways of building one's life on a foundation like shifting sand, and inevitable downfall is the certain prospect of every one of them. In fact, that is the only thing that is certain about them. To the careless eye the work may look firm enough, but it never is. COLLAPSE MAY BE LONG IN COMING, BUT IT WILL COME.

One form of shifting sand is the policy of expediency. That means to assume that the most important thing is to get along easily, or to do the most agreeable thing at the moment. Ella Wheeler Wilcox wrote a line that is worth applying in all proposed action - "Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right." We may also say that nothing is ever really done till it is done right, and it is never done right unless it is well founded.

In common usage the term "radical" is often misapplied. It does not mean wild and reckless thinking and action, as some seem to assume. Its true meaning is "getting at the root of things". The man who built his house on a rock was a true radical. He thought beneath the surface. He considered sources and consequences. That is what we must do in our decisions and our actions, and we are likely to do that only if we make it a habit in our thinking. The easy way, the immediate way, the popular way, may be shifting sand. Be certain.

Many older people now have the habit of thinking to the depths or roots of things, and try to base their thoughts, plans and actions solidly, who did not do so in their youth. They had to learn the hard way, and some have found it very hard. They are to be commended and complimented that they have learned the lesson, and that they now follow the wiser course of living solidly; but they cannot keep from thinking sometimes of the tragedy of all the time they lost and all they might have accomplished if they had considered the master's parable and learned it in the beginning.

Be careful about taking up popular ideas without considering their bases. They tend to run to fads and fancies, which are seldom solidly founded. They shift, and change, and come and go, because the public is merely seeking something different and more exciting. The bedrock of truth and right is eternal and unchanging. Wisdom does not change with the seasons, the generations, or the fashions. Building on it may be less spectacular, but it is sure.

Consider the world's appraisal of people who have lived in the past. Consider the community's judgment of people who have lived in it and passed on. It is not the foibles that are appreciated and praised. More and more the remembered picture of a person is composed of the enduring qualities of his nature and work. We build better if we take that into account.

What is the shifting sand or the solid rock is not always determined by one hurried look. Either may deceive you by looking like the other. Learn to examine closely and distinguish clearly that your building may be sure, that the structure of your life may stand.



### SECURE FOUNDATIONS

**S**O much for the shifting sand. What are some of the forms in which we find the solid rock? What are some of the secure foundations one can lay? We should have at least a few fixed principles by which to think, and plan, and work, and live, - guide lines to keep us moving in the right direction. We need a few rules we will not violate in what we think or do, however strong the pull the other way may be, however inexpedient our decisions may seem at the moment, however doubtful and unsure of ourselves we may feel. Right principles help keep us sure, but what shall those principles be?

A certain man gave this answer: "I do not claim to be all-wise, but I have laid down a few things I feel I must believe and to which I feel I must be true to keep on solid ground. By these things I try to check every proposition, possibility, and plan, and allow nothing to violate them. I MUST BELIEVE IN GOD. I MUST BE LOYAL TO MY COUNTRY. I MUST KEEP FAITH WITH MY LOVED ONES. I CLAIM NO FREEDOM TO VIOLATE ANY OF THESE OBLIGATIONS. My pattern of life must always fit itself to these loyalties."

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In the fourth chapter of his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul records his list of measuring sticks, fundamental standards and values, on which to build his thought life, his conduct, his choices, and his relationships, and which he recommends to others. He says: "Finally, brethren, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT, IF THERE BE ANY VIRTUE, AND IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE, THINK ON THESE THINGS."

Notice that St. Paul only says to think on these things. That is a safe approach for a teacher to make. He knew that what we think upon we do, and what we contemplate we become. The limitation in this list is that all the elements in it are individual and personal virtues. These are vitally important, but we also need some directions on how to carry them into action and weave them into human relations.

For that we must turn to the sermon on the mount. After all, that was the statement the master climaxed with this parable. The idea was that however perfect the idea was, failure to carry it out was shifting sand, while keeping it was solid rock. More graces are hidden in that utterance than are mentioned by name.

We need be in no doubt or confusion about this program for living. The sermon on the mount is expressed in plain words and deals with familiar things and situations. Keeping it involves keeping all of St. Paul's objectives and more.

Now and then, Literature or Science slants in the direction of this formula for living, and History is always verifying it; but the adequate thing is to take the sermon on the mount as it is and make it a program. Do that, and you will surely be likened unto a man who built his house upon a rock.



THE TEST OF HISTORY

**H**OW are we to know whether all this is true or not? The sermon on the mount was a noble utterance, but pitifully few have wholly lived by it, and distressingly many who are not living by it seem to be getting along very well so far as worldly success goes. Can it be that this proposition is all a mistake? How are we to know?

You can determine nothing by just supposing that a claim might be true or it might not. It is the demonstration that tells. Actual living a thing is the test. Even if too few have lived the sermon on the mount, have they been the best or the worst of their times?

We can judge nothing by merely observing who seem to be succeeding in an immediate and superficial way today. As someone has said, the peacock of today is the feather duster of tomorrow. Immediate worldly success does not interest the ages, and the only test that tells anything dependable is the long time test.

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Let us look at it this way:

Not many names from the generation of Jesus the man are remembered now, and most of the people who are remembered from then are remembered for the mistakes they made and the wrong they did. We remember Tiberius, Caligula, Pilate, Herod. Each was supposed to be doing quite well in his time, but not many of us now would want to have played their roles. Their memories are less than dust because there was something wrong with the foundations on which they built.

From that generation the best remembered and the ones remembered for the best reasons are Jesus and the men who tried to think and live by the pattern he taught them. More of his acts and words are treasured and more about his personality remains potent than of any others in his time or any other time. The reason is that his work survived all the opposition it met because it was built on solid foundations.

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People in general did not consider that Jesus was getting along very well in his day. He did not meet or try to meet the ordinarily accepted standards of success. But how is it now? It takes the test of time really to make sure. Now we have it by which to judge whether his principles of life, epitomized in the sermon on the mount, were right or not.

The people who opposed him may have thought they were doing the right thing, but they knew not what they did. They did not understand. They were not aware. Many do not understand now, but they will not oppose. It is safe to live the sermon on the mount today. Many will even honor you for doing it, but you will have a better reward than that - the fact that what you do and represent will endure forever.

That is the test of history. Every thing, big or little, public or secret, that we do has to meet that test. A thousand years from now the influences you sent out from your life may no longer be tagged with your name, but they will be yours. You created them and set them going, and you will have to bear the responsibility for what they do. If you build them on true foundations they need give you no concern.

#### IF WE COULD TRY AGAIN

**W**E often hear someone say, "Oh, if I could only have another chance! If I could only go back and begin again, knowing what I do now, how much better I could do! How much more I could make of my life!" Probably you have said the same thing. Most of us have.

This is an honest cry of the human heart. Most of us think we could do better, and we probably could. But the clock is inexorable. It runs in only one direction, and it keeps ticking away. Its very tick seems to say that we can go forward, indeed we must, but not back.

What is wrong? What is the occasion of all this? It is the cry of people who have not been careful enough about their foundations. We know it now, but at the time we were either not wise enough or not careful enough. So on restless pillows we retrace the years in memory, thinking how much better we might have done this or that. Meanwhile the clock ticks on. The hands are set for only one direction. We cannot turn them back.

Some followed the impulses of youth, rejected the counsel of experience, and said they proposed to make their own mistakes, have their own experience, and learn their own lessons. They did but the price was high. Their foundations crumbled too late to be mended.

Some listened to the voice of the crowd, thinking the majority is always right, when as a matter of fact it is the thinking minority that is not swept about by every changing wind of custom that usually leads the mob back to sanity.

Some lost the way by falling under the influence of false teachers and leaders, mistaking novelty for truth and brilliancy for wisdom, only to discover after the damage had been done that they had really been sailing without chart or compass, ignoring the safe courses, and wise counsels, and dependable examples.

Some followed the influences of prejudice and desire, only to learn that it was not along the line of their own best interests that they were being led.

Some assumed that what they did and the way they went was not important, that soon or late the whole matter would automatically take care of itself.

Now, in later years, they see the picture as it might have been and realize how easy it would have been to do things better. The trouble was with the foundation. To correct it would require a complete job of rebuilding, and the hour is late.

Yet IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO BEGIN ANEW. We may not be able to do all we might wish, but we can do what we can. With the knowledge and experience we now

have, we may be able to accomplish surprisingly much and do it surprisingly well. Since it is a life you are building, there are no complications to hinder or delay you. Who knows, perhaps your experience, even your failures, may have made you a MASTER BUILDER?

#### SEE THE PATTERN WHOLE

**H**ENRY CHURCHILL KING once said that the first secret of living well is to see life steadily and see it whole. One who does that is thus able to plan a good foundation, and set upon it a worthy superstructure.

You have tried to solve picture puzzles, of course. If you have the process has taught you certain things. One is that it takes time, effort, and ingenuity to do what from the beginning looked so easy. Hour after hour you work over something you thought you could do in a few minutes.

Another thing you learned is that if you just see a heap of pieces and pick up one after the other, trying to find a place for it, you get nowhere. Your confusion increases as you find there is no place for the piece you hold in your hand, because you have not yet made a place for it.

Then you pause and study the total design with its objects and colorings. As you do so the problem seems to loosen up and the difficulty to dissolve. Soon you are under way, and the whole matter clears up as you go along. It still takes time and care, but you are succeeding.

What has happened is that you have stopped picking up pieces in haphazard fashion and trying to find places for them. You watch the elements of position and color, and find your pieces because you know what you are trying to do. You are selecting your pieces with a purpose in mind, and with some idea what it will take to keep moving toward a total pattern. You are seeing your problem steadily and seeing it whole.

As a painter must have a picture, a scene, or a model before him, so he can follow all the shadings of light, form, and color, seeing what he is to put on canvas, so you must see what kind of life you propose to live, how you want your picture to look when it is done. When you can look at the total pattern you have some idea how to proceed. Knowing what you want to build, you know what kind of a foundation it will take to bear it. You know in any case that it must be solid. When you visualize all this, you will be better able to do it.

If you take advice, be sure it is good advice. If you follow an example, be certain it is a worthy example. If you are affected by influence, let it be the influence of someone who has done well.

What shall that pattern be? Before uttering this parable, Jesus had just been making that clear. The pattern laid down in the sermon on the mount will never be improved upon. It has integrity, truth, happiness, and all the rest of the desirable qualities of a life in it. Why follow blind guides, and shallow thinkers, and careless workmen, and self-appointed advisers, when you have the best at your disposal? Here the good life is all charted so you can see it steadily and see it whole.

But when all that is done, one important matter remains. It may not be so beautiful, but it must be strong. It may not be seen by many, but it is necessary. It may be plain, but it must be there. It is the matter of A GOOD FOUNDATION.



Let us say together the following prayer, knowing that the sincere hearts of the Companions in your Class give great strength to our petition.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I accept my task of building a life. Help me as days go by to build it well, but today help me to lay its foundations on the solid rock of truth and right, that when the tempests blow I need have no fear. Amen.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessie Dawn".

Benediction: May the silence of the hills, the joy of the winds, the peace of the fields, the music of the birds, the fire of the sun, the strength of the trees, and the faith of a little child - IN ALL OF WHICH THERE IS GOD - BE IN YOUR HEART.

Your second lesson, of vast importance in this series, is entitled THE GARDEN OF THE HEART.

